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Stella Jean Hanley

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ORAL HISTORY OF APPALACHIA
400 Hal Greer Boulevard
Huntington, West Virginia 25755-2667
304/696-6799

SUBJECT: Owens Glass Plant

ORAL HISTORY NUMBER: _____

MORROW ACCESSION NUMBER: _____

ORAL HISTORY

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OWENS GLASS HISTORY PROJECT

AN ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: STELLA JEAN HANLEY

CONDUCTED BY: CHRISTIE KASPRZAK

DATE OF INTERVIEW: JUNE 22, 1994

Christie: Okay, today's date is June 22nd, 1994. And this interview's for the Owen's Glass History Project. And what's your full name?

Stella: Stella Jean Hanley.

Christie: When were you born?

Stella: 1939, June 21st, 1939.

Christie: Okay. And you're married? (yes) What's your husband's name?

Stella: Norman Hanley.

Christie: And you have four children? (yes) Uh...where did you go to school?

Stella: Wayne High School. I graduated in '57, 1957.

Christie: So when did you start working at Owens?

Stella: Uh...I got out of school I believe the end of May, and I went to work in July of 1957. (so right out of high school...) Yes.

Christie: And what job did you start at?

Stella: Selecting.

Christie: How did you like that job when you first started?

Stella: Well, it was hard. All of the work was hard and fast. But uh, I liked it okay. It wasn't a pressure job to me. Physically hard.

Christie: Oh, it was physically hard? In what way?

Stella: Well, you stood and you give one thing all day long. (you had to stand all day long, too.) Yes. When I first went there, they only had uh, I believe maybe a baby food job, that was on a round table; you got to sit maybe 15 minutes in an hour. Or something like that. All the others were straight layers...as I can remember.

Christie: What made you decide to work there?

Stella: Well, I wanted to do something and it was good money.

Christie: [chuckling] Uh...and how did you get the job?

Stella: Well, my mother worked there. And uh, I believe she talked to the personnel manager and she interviewed us and we took tests. And I got the job.

Christie: What did you mother do?

Stella: She was a selector.

Christie: How many years did she work there?

Stella: She went there, I believe, once in '50 and left, and then went back in in about '56. Uh...she left and went to Owens plant in Lakeland, Florida in 1967 or '66, whenever it opened, whatever year it opened; she went down there. (mmmh)

Christie: And then when did your husband start working at the plant?

Stella: Uh, 1962. (did you meet him there?) No, we were already married, and had one child. (oh, you were already married)

Christie: So what kind of opportunities for advancement were available when you started?

Stella: At that time there was a lot of people there. And the older people with seniority got certain jobs. Uh, a lot of the men were crew leaders. And I don't believe we had any women crew leaders at that time. All of our...and foremans were men. But later on, uh, women became crew leaders.

Christie: About what time? What time period?

Stella: Well, I was there almost 10 years, almost 9 or 10 years the first time. There was no women in the, in...crew leaders or foremans.

Christie: So you were there from about '57 to '67, somewhere around there?

Stella: '66 I believe. I took a pregnancy leave, and didn't go back.

Christie: And when did you finally go back?

Stella: Uh, 20 years later. [laughing] I stayed home and raised my four children. And then they were rehiring, trying to get people that had worked there before. So I got in contact with uh, the man that hired, or the ...I believe he was a supervisor of the, of the selecting department, and asked that if they ever hired if he would reconsider calling me back. And it was about a year before I got called back.

Christie: That was in the late '80's?

Stella: '87.

Christie: '87. So how were things different uh, that, I'm sure there was many ways, but that you can think of between the first time period that you worked there, and then when you went back?

Stella: Well, when I worked there the first time, they had straight layers. You stood almost all the time. You worked on the side of the layers. Sometimes you uh, you loaded your own cartons. And you had a stamper, and each box that you went through, each carton you packed, you stamped it to let them know that, so if it was bad, they'd know who to come back on. And uh, then when I went

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back, there was a lot of machines. And uh, there was sit-down jobs; maybe you would sit 15 minutes, stand 30, sit 15, it'd depend on how many people were on the line, on that line. And uh, it was a lot faster. Instead of five tanks, there was only three. And uh, and I was there the first time there were like four or five layers maybe for one tank. When I went back, there was like three on each tank. And uh, it was a lot faster.

Christie: Any other kind of changes?

Stella: Well, there was women crew leaders and women foremans.

Christie: So you were there when that changed, but you just sort of came after (yes), women had already started getting those opportunities (yes). But you did say you knew Opal Mann? Right? (oh, yes) And you don't know anything about the lawsuit? (no) About what happened?

Stella: No, I wasn't working at that time, and I have no idea.

Christie: Okay. Uh...well, since you and your husband were both working shift work, uh, was it hard to balance home and work?

Stella: Yes. We had uh, a couple of real good babysitters. One especially was Nandra Watts. And when she stayed with us, we had no problem. But after she left, I believe she either went back to school, or got a job; I can't remember. But uh, we had a hard time getting a suitable babysitter. So, I worked one shift and he worked another. And we would uh, just have to have a babysitter in the change of shifts, which was like an hour, hour and a half. But it was still hard. And then when I got pregnant the third time, we had twin boys, so we had a four year old, two year old and twins. So he asked me to quit work and stay home and raise them. So that's what I did.

Christie: Well, how did he feel about you working when you were working?

Stella: I don't really remember so much. He just rather I didn't work. But...he didn't care when I went back, though, because our children was raised and

Christie: Now, was he still there when you went back? (yes, that's his picture) So uh...now, when you went back, was there, was there any difference in uh, social activities and friends and the relationships on the job?

Stella: Well, the first time they had more activities. When I was there the first time I...I played horseshoes. We had horseshoe tournaments. And uh, Ruth McGraw was my partner. And uh, we had dough parties, just like women got together and had a party. And uh, when I went back they still had the party, you know, we had like uh, at Christmas years ago they had like Christmas parties, Easter parties, all for the children. They had a lot for the children. And like Rod & Game club once a year. And then they would have like maybe something down at Ow, uh, Camden Park maybe once a year or something. And uh, they gave away gifts. Sometimes they had it at a country club I think, up on Route 60, or Route 2,

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or something. And but it was, there was more activities years ago, than there was there at the end. And we had a lot of, at that time, they had a lot of people and had a lot of children.

Christie: What about relationships on the job? Did you have a lot of friends there?

Stella: Oh, yes, a lot of 'em, really. That was their life. They spent like the 30 years in there, and they really missed, you know, the people that they worked with. Because you work with them every day and you get to know them. I mean, they're like, you're with them so much (mmm-hmm). And a lot of times you knew all about their children, all about their families. But maybe you didn't even know their last name. Or I didn't, you know.

Christie: Did you not see them outside of work?

Stella: Not a lot. Because they were from all over. Some people lived at Milton, some lived at Salt Rock, some at, down in Kentucky. And just different parts of town. Lavalette, and

Christie: So how did you feel when you first had to leave? (the first time?) Your friends, yeah.

Stella: Well, I was so busy at that time, it didn't mean as much then, I don't think, with having to leave.... I missed them. And occasionally I would uh, uh, my husband still worked there and at Christmas I would go to the Christmas parties so I could see everybody. I enjoyed that.

Christie: And then now ...leaving, do you still keep in touch with friends?

Stella: Well, we belong to the auxiliary, I belong to the auxiliary and I belong to the Go-Getters Club. So uh, we get together, auxiliary once a month. Except in the summer. And then in the Go-Getters get together you know, every so often. So you still get to see a lot of 'em. And by going to school uh, in these meetings we've been having about our schooling, we've still gotten to see a lot of them.

Christie: What are you taking in school?

Stella: Right now I'll just be taking a refresher course. I don't know yet, if I'm gonna go back or not. I...I believe I will, but I haven't really made up my mind.

Christie: Is this being offered at Marshall?

Stella: Yes, different places. (different places) Mmm-hmm. I've already been up at Marshall and talked to them up there. But I wanted to take the refresher course because I've been out of school since '57, and that's a long time. (mmm-hmm)

Christie: When you went back, in '87, you said women were in higher positions. Did you have a supervisor who was a woman?

Stella: I believe at that time ...I'm not sure. Emma Chapman

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became a supervisor, and well, not a supervisor, a foreman. She was part-time. She was just filling in for the men. One of them retired; then she took his position. (oh, okay) But there, crew leaders, there was a lot of almost all of the, all of the crew leaders were women (in the selecting?).

Christie: Were there women in higher positions in other places in the plant, or do you know? Other departments?

Stella: I don't know. I didn't pay any attention.

Christie: How big was your department?

Stella: I don't know whether we had like uh...maybe 50 or 60 selectors, something...I don't really, I really don't know. I know to cover the line, now I think that's for everything like in one day, maybe they would need at one time it was about 80. And then later it went, it kept coming down towards the end I think maybe 50 covered the line.

Christie: Why did they need fewer and fewer?

Stella: Well, they got rid of different machines, you know, and started cutting before they closed. So it just kept going down.

Christie: Oh, okay. So when was your last day of work there?

Stella: I really...it was in December. We usually get like almost I don't know if it was the 18th or 20th, something around then. We usually take, get uh, like two weeks, I mean right before Christmas we're off. And then we're off like for two weeks, through the holidays and to, through New Years, and then start back again as a rule. So I think it was around maybe the 18th or 19th, something like that.

Christie: So you went, it was sort of like your regular vacation, then you just didn't go back? (well, I) Did they tell you though, ahead of time? Did you know ahead of time that you weren't going to be coming back in January?

Stella: Oh, yes, they told us three months. (oh, they did 3 months?) I think it's a law (they had to give you notice), mmm-hmm. That they were closing. We had three months notice. (yeah)

Christie: It must have been hard then, to work 3 months after you already knew.

Stella: Well, see, I had a son that worked there, too. (at the same time?) He was on the hot end.

Christie: What did he do there?

Stella: He made bottles.

Christie: He was a machine operator? (mmm-hmm) What's his name? (Michael Hanley) So what's he doing now?

Stella: Right now he's still looking for work. He's uh, he was

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going to try to, he was going, thinking of maybe having to even leave the state. But his wife got accepted to St. Mary's, so they decided that they would try for him to find something here. I mean, he's been trying. He's been to Ashland, he's been to Ironton, he's been to Gallipolis.

Christie: What about you and your husband? The same?

Stella: Well, we, I haven't been all those places. He hasn't been out of work as long as I have. (oh, he got to work after December?) He worked two or three more months. Two and a half months, I believe.

Christie: Does he not have enough years in for retirement?

Stella: Well, he had 31 years.

Christie: Thirty-one (mmm-hmm) So he just barely made the retirement year. [laughing] So you are gonna look in Huntington for another job, but you're trying to go to school maybe first?

Stella: We looked...we went to Florida, but the wages down there aren't very good. And uh, to be able to move some place you'd have to have where you could at least, you know, enough money to...to set you up.

Christie: Yeah, it'd be hard to get up and move all the way down there, too.

Stella: But the wages, well, they just really didn't have that many jobs, maybe like in a dress place, or you know, like a store or something, just like around here. But it would be minimum wage (mmm-hmm). But we went down there and looked.

Christie: Were there uh...women of different races in your department? Or men...there were men also in the selecting, is that right? (mmm-hmm) Were there people of different races?

Stella: Blacks and whites.

Christie: Were there a lot of blacks?

Stella: Not a lot. (no?) One of my foremans was black. (a man or a woman?) A woman. (a woman) Before I quit.

Christie: Did you know her personally?

Stella: Well, I knew her from the clubs, and everything.

Christie: So uh, whoops, so uh...did that change from the first time period that you worked there, '57 to '67? Were there blacks working there then?

Stella: Not that I know of. In '57 I, if there was, I didn't know (not in your department?) not in my department; so I don't really know.

Christie: Did you think the relationships on the job, between blacks and whites was amiable?

Stella: I didn't have any problem. I had a real good friend, Priscilla Early; she was black.

Christie: Priscilla Early? (Earling, I believe was...)

Stella: But I never...I didn't seem to have any problems.

Christie: Well, that's good. Uh...what about the union? You had to be a member of the union, right, when you worked there? (right) Did you go to meetings?

Stella: When I first went there I did, but seems like union meetings...are confusion [laughing].... So I didn't go to a lot, no. I mean, uh, a boy that I was raised with, Bobby Joe Adkins, was vice-president, I believe, whenever the plant closed. But I didn't go to a lot of 'em.

Christie: Did you ever go on strike at the union?

Stella: Yes; I walked picket. (you did? when was that?) Oh, I don't remember. It was, I believe, it was around, I was thinking it was about four or five years after my husband and I got married. I'm not sure. (so the late sixties?) Well, one time, all I know is one time we struck, and I remember walking picket at the back of the plant. I mean, that's all I remember about it. (you don't remember why?) No, I really don't. It's been so long, you know. (mmm-hmm) I really don't. But I remember.... And I hate strikes. (really? why?) Because there's so much, when they last very long so many people get hurt. And I hate to see someone you know, maybe get mad and stay mad the rest of their life over, you know.... And somebody really get hurt. And sometimes they do. (you mean physically?) Yeah, maybe not here, but (people get angry?) yeah, that's what I mean. Like that man getting shot at those strikes and stuff, and I just, I just hate it. (yeah) I hate it, what it does to people. (it causes a lot of tension at work, too) Why, I don't know, I don't remember; it's been so long. (mmh) But I remember walking picket. [laughs]

Christie: So didn't men and women generally have different jobs?

Stella: Yes. When I first went there they did. At the end they didn't. It didn't seem like. Everybody now, we didn't have a woman on the hot end. That was where they make the glass, and but other than that, I couldn't, after we went back, I couldn't see where there was that much difference. Now, I don't know. I mean, you know, I didn't pay any attention. I just tried to do the best I could on my job. (yeah)

Christie: Well, in your department only, then, in selecting, there was only women in the early years?

Stella: No, there was only women selectors.

Christie: So they weren't anywhere else in the plant? (the women?) Right.

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Stella: Now, I don't know. I guess they were in the offices, and uh, but as far as I know that they weren't in shipping or that I know of (mmm-hmm). Now, they worked in corrugated, I believe. I believe...well, now, I don't know about...I know there was uh...when I went back there was women in corrugated. Now, I don't know about before, whether they were corrugated or not. Uh...when I first went there, men were layer attendants, that was the only layer attendants. And when I went back women could be layer attendants if they wanted to.

Christie: Okay. So did you feel like you had the kind of opportunities if you wanted to do any kind of supervising? Could you have done that?

Stella: I think so. I mean, whoever wanted it, I think if they were qualified, I think they had that choice.

Christie: And that was based on seniority then? (at the end?)

[both talking simultaneously]

Stella: ...No, uh, well, now at ...at, when I went back, I don't believe it was based on seniority. I think it was probably based on qualification, I guess. They give you, they gave you tests and uh, then if you were interested in like they trained you, and if they thought you would make it, you got.... The way I saw it they....

Christie: So there would be more people that were hourly workers might have more experience, more years in than some of the supervisors. (oh, yeah) Oh, okay. I thought that usually the supervisors had more seniority.

Stella: Not always. (okay)

Christie: It was my understanding that the plant had a takeover in the '80's and they merged I guess KKR and Brockway. Did that change things?

Stella: It seemed like it did. It had a different uh, you know, different people came in that wasn't local and stuff. But [pause]...it seemed like it changed. (it did?) I don't know exactly.

Christie: In any particular ways?

Stella: I don't really know exactly how, but it did change. Gradually, gradually it changed.

Christie: To be less rewarding or...?

Stella: I don't really know. It just, I don't know. It was just different.

Christie: So what uh, what were some of the things that you liked best about working there?

Stella: Well, one thing the people were giving. Like maybe

someone was off sick or something, they would take up collections. Someone uh, had a baby, they'd have 'em a shower. I mean, they did things all, all through the years. To me, that didn't change. Because when I first went there, they were like that. If someone needed something, they tried to help. There weren't, they didn't seem selfish. You know. They seemed like they were a giving factory, you know, to (mmm-hmm). And they liked, they seemed to want to help people.

Christie: Now, that was the other workers, or was that...?

Stella: Yeah, other workers. (yeah) Well, Owens uh, they were good, too, about over the years. Now, years ago like they would have like Easter parties and what they had left they would take and donate to somebody that needed it. Or uh, an organization or something. And they were good about donating like that and giving. And then at Christmas they would fix food baskets for people. And uh, they did a lot of good. And the people seemed to like to help other people, and they would work together.

Christie: Well, that's nice. (mmm-hmm) Were there certain things that you disliked about the job?

Stella: It was hard! [laughing] (it was hard) Mostly it was hard, and it was sort of dirty. You know, the dope, the ...you'd come home dirty, but mostly the, it was physically hard. And the swing shift was hard to get used to. I mean, that was uh, but it was physically a hard job.

Christie: Do you have any physical problems now because of working there for so many years?

Stella: Uh...I don't believe it's from working there. [laughing]

Christie: Well uh, I've asked you most of the questions. I didn't know if you might want to, if there was anything about your husband's experience that you thought was important since he won't be talking to us. [laughter] Or I didn't know did he like working at the plant?

Stella: Well, he's made us a good living. I guess he did. (yeah)

Christie: There's nothing in particular that you think about his experience that you think, you know?

Stella: Well, I mean, he would have to say. (you didn't have any other family, then. You had your son and you and your husband and your mother. That's a lot of people.) My sister. (oh, and your sister, too. Wow) [laughs]

Christie: Just kind of a family...

Stella: Well, my, a long time ago it was. It seemed like whenever you know, if you were a good, hard worker, they would hire your family and give them a chance, you know. And uh, but uh, I don't know about now, whether that makes any difference or not. I mean, you know, whether that made any difference there at the last or not. I think they hired through the job service or something.

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Christie: So, there was a lot more family there, I guess, in the earlier years.

Stella: Oh, yeah. There was uh, in this, one of these there's a Steven's family. Did you see that?

Christie: Yeah, I think there was four boys and I guess their mother worked there, too.

Stella: There was five of 'em, it said. (yeah)

Christie: But I guess it wasn't the same like that later.

Stella: No, I don't think so. Because you, they hired through the job service. They still occasionally hired someone you know, that happened to be family. But it, it wasn't like it was before...I don't believe. (I see)

Christie: So uh, do you have any kind of benefits that you're getting now?

Stella: I'm 55 yesterday, so, I can draw a pension if I want to start drawing it now or I can wait until I'm 65. And when I'm 65 I will be able to draw something for the 16 years I had in. I had 16 years and 11, I believe it was 16 years and 11 months, or 15 years and 11 months.

Christie: I see. And do you get any kind of medical benefits?

Stella: Well, my husband was on salary so....

Christie: Okay, so he's got a plan? (mmm-hmm) From retirement. And he did put in over 30 years? (oh, yes) Well, that's wonderful. That's really all I have. Is there anything you'd like to tell me that I didn't ask you about?

Stella: I don't believe so. [laughing]

Christie: Okay. Well, thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW